

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 7 and 17 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 1-6, 8-16, and 18-20 are pending. Claims 1 and 11 are amended. Claims 1 and 11 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 7 and 17 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The Applicants appreciate the Examiner's early indication of allowable subject matter. In response, claims 1 and 11 are amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected to claims 7 and 17, respectively.

Therefore, independent claims 1 and 11 are in condition for allowance.

Claim for Priority

It is gratefully acknowledged that the Examiner has recognized the Applicants' claim for foreign priority.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 1-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In order to overcome this rejection, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 11 to address the issues specifically pointed out by the Examiner. Applicants respectfully submit that the claims, as amended, particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 5-6 and 9-12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by JP-08-18585. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

While not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, each of independent claims 1 and 11 is amended herein to include the allowable subject matter of objected to claims 7 and 17, respectively.

Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of elements as set forth in each of independent claims 1 and 11 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including JP 08-18585.

Therefore, claims 1 and 11 are in condition for allowance. Further, dependent claims 2-6, 8-10, 12-16, and 18-20 are in condition for allowance

due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) are respectfully requested.

All claims of this application are now in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.17 and 1.136(a), Applicant(s) respectfully petition(s) for a two (2) month extension of time for filing a reply in connection with the present application, and the required fee of \$420.00 is attached hereto.

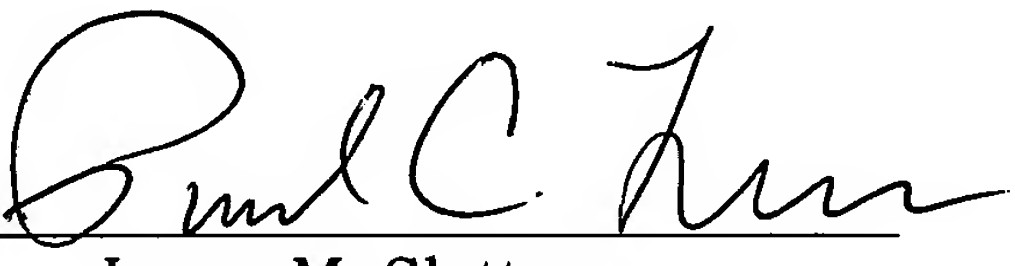
Application No. 10/649,795
Amendment dated September 30, 2004
Reply to Office Action of May 12, 2004

Docket No. 0505-1239P
Art Unit:3611
Page 12 of 12

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,
BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By 
James M. Slattery
for Reg. No. 28,380 #43,362

P. O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000


JMS:CTT:adt